

Vermont's congressional delegation – Sen. Patrick Leahy (D), Sen. Bernie Sanders (I) and Rep. Peter Welch (D) – today announced a one million dollar grant to the Montpelier-based Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC).

Through the grant, ISC will work with the joint HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities (PSC), which coordinates federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure investments to make neighborhoods more prosperous, allow people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution.

The grant will allow ISC to create a National Sustainability Learning Network to help streamline and increase the effectiveness of PSC's efforts. Through online and in-person, peer-to-peer mentoring, the Network will identify, showcase and disseminate the most promising practices, valuable tools and resources that advance sustainable communities and integrated regional development.

Leahy is a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Transportation and Housing and Urban Development, which included funding for the program. In 2010 Leahy worked to add a requirement that sets aside funds in the Sustainable Communities Program for rural areas -- a carve out that has been carried forward in 2011.

"This is great news for Vermont and the rest of the country," Vermont's congressional delegation said in a joint statement. "As we rebuild America's infrastructure and put people back to work, it is vital that we do so in a way that builds stronger, more sustainable communities. ISC has a track record of success doing this and their bottom-up approach creates community leadership and lasting results. We are encouraged that their talents and expertise will be applied to this initiative."

"We are very proud to work with HUD, EPA and several other organizations and agencies on this terrific effort to help US communities become more prosperous, resilient, and livable," said ISC President George Hamilton. "This project is an important element of our strategy to advance sustainable development practices in US communities and in countries around the world."

"Our role, in partnership with Smart Growth America, will be to build a national peer-learning program for sustainable community development practitioners," said Steve Nicholas, ISC's Vice President for US & Climate Programs. "This network will help local government officials and community leaders share ideas and experiences, and help each other improve, accelerate and scale-up their work to make their communities even better places to work and live."

ISC was founded by former Governor Madeleine Kunin in 1991 to help communities around the world address environmental, economic, and social challenges. To date, ISC has managed 77 projects in 22 countries.